

I.

From *The Times*, January 17th.

CHARLOTTE MASON.*

(1842-1923)

A PIONEER OF SANE EDUCATION.

Many hundreds of parents and teachers in all parts of the world will join in mourning Miss Charlotte Mason, who died in her sleep at the "House of Education," Ambleside, at noon yesterday. She founded the Parents' National Educational Union so long ago as 1887, and strove steadily for more than half a century to create a system of education that should form a balanced union of religious belief and literary and scientific thoroughness.

Her personal influence was probably more widespread than that of any educationist of her time. The loyalty which she inspired was more than could be accounted for by the mere weight and force of her educational philosophy. The "House of Education" founded by her rapidly acquired a tradition and a spirit radiating throughout the great system which she evolved of "home schools," with many hundreds of children and governesses widely separated in space but one in endeavour, working through the same syllabuses with the same books, and passing by means of test-papers, sent to Ambleside for correction, through the same series of grades. Until almost the last it was the pride of Miss Mason's many disciples that she knew all the children in the "Parents' Union School," looked through

(1892)

*By kind permission of the Editor of THE TIMES.

An Official Tribute.

Board of Education,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

12th February, 1923.

Dear Madam,

I do not think it is right that I should allow the death of Miss Charlotte Mason to pass without recording officially the deep regret of the Board of Education at the termination of her long and fruitful labours in the field of education, and their high appreciation of the great public services which she has rendered.

We know that Miss Mason started her work very early in life, and she carried it on with unremitting diligence and enthusiasm for over half a century. The fundamental principle of her teaching—a belief in the child's natural powers of appreciation—was unfamiliar in England when she was young. It is far otherwise to-day, and that perhaps is in itself the best evidence of what we owe to her and the most lasting memorial of her labours. Her influence, diffused through her books and the Union which she founded, was a source of strength to many hundreds of teachers, and though she did not come into direct relations with the public system of education as administered by the Board and the Local Education Authorities, there can be no question of the profound and permanent benefit accruing to that system from her life and example, and from her efforts to establish and diffuse the principles which she followed. She was a high-minded, disinterested and sincere worker for the advancement of education, who combined a generous vision and a good practical judgment, and on behalf of the President and my colleagues I join with the Parents' National Educational Union in deploring her loss and paying tribute to her memory.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) L. A. SELBY-BIGGE,

Permanent Secretary.

The Hon. Mrs. Franklin,

Parents' National Educational Union,

26, Victoria Street, S.W.1.

their work, and followed their progress. The "House of Education" has been, incidentally, the only institution that has offered special professional training to the private governess.

Charlotte Maria Shaw Mason was born on January 1st, 1842, the daughter of Joshua Mason, a Liverpool merchant. After a home education she was drawn to teaching work, and after some experience in various schools and in a training college at Chichester, she began her work as an educational reformer, and eventually founded the Union associated with her name. The principles which she preached and which she lived to see widely adopted, both in the schools that confessedly carried out her ideas and in schools that tacitly adopted them, were the hunger for knowledge, the use of school life as a deliberate preparation for the larger interests of life, and the cultivation of a natural and earnest interest in nature and art. She continually preached the one-ness of education and the universal necessity of knowledge: "Without knowledge Reason carries a man into the wilderness and Rebellion joins company." That is a quotation from a remarkable series of letters on "The Basis of National Strength" contributed to *The Times* in 1921. Knowledge well balanced was her panacea for the dangers of revolution; and such knowledge must be universal. It was the due balance on different sides of education which in her view made for national sanity.

The Parents' Union School was founded in 1891 to press forward these principles, and by 1918 Miss Mason's ideas had permeated some forty elementary schools.* A number of preparatory schools adopted the syllabuses in greater or less degree and became known as "P.N.E.U. Schools," a guarantee to parents that the home point of view would at least not be disregarded. Great praise of the method came from various parts of the country—Bradford, Gloucestershire—and Miss Mason was satisfied to the last that her scheme of education was making considerable progress in elementary as well as secondary schools and in private teaching. Miss Mason's publications include "Home Education," "Parents and Children," "School Education," "Our-

*Now nearly 200.

selves," "Some Studies in the Formation of Character," "The Ambleside Geography Books," "The Saviour of the World" (a life of Christ, an issue running into six volumes), "The Basis of National Strength," and "A Liberal Education for All." Miss Mason's work was not dethroned by the various modern developments in the direction of freedom of education. Together with other educational reformers of to-day she saw children not as little unwilling receptacles for information, but growing creatures struggling towards the light, eager to learn, eager to work, and too often starved of the means of doing so.

II.

From *The Times Educational Supplement*,
January 20th.

A PERSONAL TRIBUTE.

A correspondent writes:—Charlotte Mason was that rare combination, an original thinker and philosopher and at the same time a wonderful organiser and business woman. She was wise and witty, keenly interested in the things of the world, birds and flowers, books and people, but with an inner vision for the beyond, and the graciousness of manner and selfless consideration for others which marked the *grande dame* of a passing age. She treated the smallest child with courtesy. She was gracious to the youngest member of her household just as she was to the great of the land who were among her disciples. Her students and all who came under her influence caught the fire of her enthusiasm for her educational principles together with her singlemindedness and humility.

She never allowed her methods of teaching and philosophy of education to be called by her name, but by that of the society she founded to spread them. Thus her work will continue and be ably carried on by those she has trained and appointed for the task. She was at work up to four days before her death, and personally superintended the many arrangements for accommodating the ever-increasing number of students wishing to enter her college. Her end was

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the passing of a great spirit. With all her powers of mind and heart fresh and keen, memory and apprehension unimpaired, she fell asleep after many days spent for the good of humanity. Her teaching has spread to almost every part of the globe; the pupils of her correspondence school are to be found in home schoolrooms, in private and council schools, and many generations of happy children filled with the joy of living and of learning will rise up and call her blessed.

[The Memorial Number will be continued in April, as several important contributions have just reached us. We also hope to publish extracts from letters, Branch resolutions, etc.—Ed.]

Our Work,

Members will be glad to know that Miss Mason made complete provision for the continuance of her work.

The business of the House of Education and the Parents' Union School is to be managed by a Council appointed by Miss Mason. This Council has power to make rules and regulations for the conduct of their business. The education work of the House of Education, the Practising School and the Parents' Union School is to be carried on by the said Council in accordance with Miss Mason's principles under the supervision of a principal as regards the House of Education, of a head mistress as regards the practising school and of a director as regards the Parents' Union School who are to be appointed by and to act under the directions of the said Council. The first Principal of the House of Education is to be Miss E. A. Parish who is to retain office for life. The first Director of the Parents' Union School is to be Miss E. Kitching who is also to retain office for life.

PARENTS' UNION SCHOOL.

This term is so short that members may take the Examination directly after Easter (April 4th—11th). Those who cannot do so may take the Examination from March 21st—28th, but the papers cannot be posted from Ambleside before the 19th.

P.N.E.U. Notes.

Edited by The General Secretary, 26, Victoria Street, S.W.

To whom all Hon. Local Secs. are requested to send reports of all matters of interest connected with their branches, also 6 copies of any prospectuses or other papers they may print. Secretaries are asked to send a short report of each lecture given to the branch, before the 11th of the month. The report to be written on one side of the paper only, and not to exceed 100 words

BALLYMENA AREA.—A successful meeting was held on Friday, January 19th, in St. Patrick's Parochial Hall, when Mrs. S. Henry, of Coleraine gave an intensely interesting Lecture on "Bird Life," illustrated by lantern slides.

It had been decided to ask the local companies of Girl Guides, Brownies, and Scouts to be present, and the audience was a large one, and most enthusiastic. At the start, some of the Brownies and Guides sang "The Cuckoo," and other bird songs; and then there were gramophone records of the actual songs of real birds. The lantern slides that followed were excellent, and were many of them made by Mr. Henry himself, from his own photographs of local birds. The children and the grown-ups were all alike deeply interested, and, at the

from
Note by Wheeler 1923

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The Parents' Union School,
Ambleside.

MASON, CHARLOTTE MARIA SHAW, Principal of the House of Education, Ambleside; Director of the Parents' Union School; Editor of the Parents' Review; b. Bangor, 1 Jan. 1842; d. of Joshua Mason, merchant, Liverpool; spinster; churchwoman. Educ. home. After a short training and some experience in schools of various grades, and in a Training College (Chichester), perceived certain principles leading to a reformed theory and practice of education; to further such reform, wrote several volumes; lectured; founded the Parents' National Educational Union, 1887; the House of Education, 1891; the Parents' Union School, 1891; the Parents' Review, 1890, etc.; has lived to see a pretty wide adoption of her principles and methods in Elementary Schools, Secondary Schools, and home schoolrooms. Publications: Home Education; Parents and Children; School Education; Some Studies in the Formation of Character; Ourselves; The Forty Shires; The Ambleside Geography Books (vols. i, ii, iii, iv, v), (revised and brought up to date, 1922); The Saviour of the World (a Life of Christ in verse); vol. i, The Holy Infancy; vol. ii, His Dominion; vol. iii, The Kingdom of Heaven; vol. iv, The Bread of Life; vol. v, The Great Controversy; vol. vi, The Training of the Disciples; The Basis of National Strength (series of Letters to The Times) and A Liberal Education for All (three pamphlets, dealing with Elementary, Continuation and Secondary Schools); articles in magazines. Recreations: reading and driving. Address: Scale How, Ambleside.

Paley

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Stone Education Lecture

1885-1886

Scheme drawn up by
the Mason & Paley.
including foreman & all
newcomers

1886

Preliminary Meeting
Draft Prop of Object &
Principles drawn up
by the Mason

1887

First Public Meeting
(Bradford)

1888

Rules & Constitution

1890

~~Drawn up~~ ~~These~~

First Annual Meeting
(London House)

1890

First P. R. (March)

1890

Parents' Union School
started June 15th

1891

House of Education started
January

1892

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Home Education lectures... 1885-1886
 Scheme drawn up by Miss Mason for P.N.E.U.
 including forecast of all the work... 1886
 Preliminary meeting... 1887.
 Draft programme of objects and principles
 drawn up by Miss Mason... 1888.
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MISS MASON AND HER WORK.

The jubilee of the Parents' National Educational Union, which is being kept in London this week, reminds us that in its 50 years the Home of Education at Ambleside has sent out some 500 young women to teach in families, in classes, or in schools. About 30,000 children are now studying on the lines laid down by Miss Charlotte Mason and nearly 400 schools scattered all over our own country and the Dominions and extending to America, exist to maintain her principles, besides a number of classes held by trained teachers.

A distinctive feature is indicated by the title of the association now a body of over 3,500 members. Parents have been too much imbued with educational circles, slightly ridiculous because ignorant, prejudiced, and incapable. Miss Mason set out to help them in the effort to understand their children; the science of child psychology had not been invented in 1888, but many of her own phrases might be spoken by a practitioner to-day. She was herself an only child, daughter of a rich merchant in Liverpool who lost his fortune. Charlotte took to teaching for her living; it was from the fullness of 20 years' experience that at the age of 47 she put forward her scheme and started on a modest scale her training centre at Ambleside. From thence teachers go out, as elsewhere, but for the home schoolroom there is the solid assistance of a syllabus, and of an examination at the end of the term, papers being sent for correction. The Parents' Review is a journal giving further help and information.

In the progress of human thought the new idea is constantly deprecated as revolutionary, gains tentative hearing, is gradually accepted, becomes a commonplace usage. The gospel of Charlotte Mason after half a century of peaceful penetration may appear always to have been the main principle of rational education. Yet to her world there was novelty in the idea that children are born as persons, neither bad nor good, but full of possibilities, physical, mental and spiritual, and that therefore while authority must require obedience the work of education is needed to assist the right development of personality. Hence three duties for the parents: the maintaining of a fit environment, but not one artificially constructed for the child; the discipline of right habits, and the presentation of living ideas as daily bread for mind and spirit. From this last grew naturally the effort which is probably most widely connected with what is known as P.N.E.U. practice in school and home: the introduction of the young to all that is best in literature and, increasingly, in art. A growing appreciation of the eternal values, an intelligence trained in the moral sphere to distinguish between "I want" and "I will", and a spiritual responsibility, for the minor and then the major choices of life. These are to be the aims. They certainly give Charlotte Mason the right to a higher place than perhaps she has yet held among educational

leaders

This week's celebrations include four sessions of conference, open to the public a dinner at which the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education is to speak, with Sir Richard Livingstone in the chair, and a Latin Grace sung by the girls of Overstone School, Northampton. All information concerning the Union and its work may be had from its offices at 38 Victoria Street, S.W.

Miss Pamela Frankau presided at the first session of the conference at which Mr. W. Monk Gibbon, English Master of the Oldfield Co-Education School (P.W.E.U.), Swanage, read an address on "Children and Culture."

Professor A. A. Cock, Professor of Education and Philosophy at University College, Southampton in a tribute to Charlotte Mason, said that so manifold and vast in scale had been the creative and destructive activity in the past 50 years that historians often failed to pay due heed to the beneficent activities of creative educators. A permanent place had to be given to the wonderful women of the Victorian and twentieth-century England. Miss Mason saw and proclaimed educational methods 30 years before they were accepted. She saw in the increasing efficiency of the machinery of education a menace to the position of the parents, even some of the betrayal of the parents' vocation to bring up their children in the fear and heritage of God.